

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet 30 April 2018

Report of Leader

Review of the Mayor's office and associated arrangements

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Cabinet of proposals to restructure the Mayor's office and associated support arrangements and to outline an alternative approach to the delivery of the Mayoral function and service. The report also considers the future of the Mayor's Parlour at the Town Hall in the context of the restructure.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet notes the restructuring proposals for the Mayor's support office and budgets.
2. That Cabinet notes and endorses the proposal to establish a Mayor's Fund to be in place by 9 May 2018.
3. That a leasehold interest in the floor area of the Town Hall, identified on the Plan at [Appendix A](#) be declared surplus.
4. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to secure a new use for the former Mayor's Parlour, as referred to in Recommendation 3 above and to appoint an external valuer to provide a market valuation report and agree Heads of Terms.
5. That the Head of Legal Services be authorised to draft and execute all necessary legal documentation associated with the disposal.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. The information is provided for noting.
2. To enable a new approach to be in place for the new Mayor once elected at the Annual General meeting on 9 May 2018.
3. To declare a leasehold interest in the Mayor's Parlour surplus to requirements
4. To enable a new and appropriate use to be found for the former Mayor's Parlour.
5. To provide authority to dispose of the leasehold interest.

Background

2. Reviews of various teams and services have been undertaken in the context of increasing year on year pressures on the Council's budget and the need to reduce costs and make savings. The Resources Directorate has a £700k saving target for 2018/19 under the Reshaping Services Programme.
3. The proposal for the Mayor's Office/function as summarised below is one of a number of savings proposals and relates specifically to governance and was put forward as part of the £700k savings to be found within the Resources Directorate for 2018/19 (increased from £600k as part of the ongoing assessment of savings). This is part of a savings target of £6.2m, council wide for 2018/19.
4. The role and function of the Mayor as Chairman of the Council is set out at paragraph 24.5.2 of the Council's Constitution. This is reproduced in full below, for completeness:

(a) Acting as a symbol of the Council's democratic authority

- (i) As the ceremonial head of the Council, to be non-political and uphold the democratic values of the Council.
- (ii) To represent the Council at civic and ceremonial functions.

(b) Chairing Council Meetings

- (i) To preside over meetings of the Council, so that its business can be carried out efficiently.
- (ii) To ensure the Council conducts its meetings in line with the Council's Standing Orders.

(c) Upholding and Promoting the Council's Constitution

To ensure the Constitution is adhered to and, if necessary, to rule on the interpretation of the Constitution.

(d) Internal Governance, Ethical Standards and Relationships

- (i) To promote and support good governance of the Council and its affairs.
- (ii) To provide community leadership and promote active citizenship.
- (iii) To promote and support open and transparent government.
- (iv) To support, and adhere to respectful, appropriate and effective relationships with employees of the Council.
- (v) To adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct, Member/Officer Protocol and the highest standards of behaviour in public office.

No changes are proposed to the Constitution in this regard.

Relevant Issues and Options

5. In the context of the above, it is proposed to drive forward savings against the cost of the Mayor Service. The specific saving relates to the budget for ceremonial and mayoral duties, accommodation costs and support costs. The proposals have been informed by the desire to drive down the cost of governance and avoid duplication in the context of increasing budget pressures and the need to protect essential services.
6. A consultation exercise has been undertaken with the staff affected by the proposals in accordance with the Council's Management of Change arrangements and that consultation has been concluded. Those elements that relate to the support staff structure and specific budget allocation are not matters that required Cabinet approval and as a result, these have been finalised and are only summarised, for context and information, as follows;

Accommodation Costs

7. The Mayor is currently located at the Town Hall, in the Mayor's Parlour, which includes supporting accommodation and floor space over two floors. As a result there is a contribution to the running expenses of the Town Hall site as a whole, which is based on a 6% figure relating to the amount of floor space occupied by the Mayor and support staff.
8. For 2017/18 the costs associated for 6% of this total floor space amounted to approximately £24.5k and includes maintenance charges, energy costs, water costs, insurance and telephony.

Support and Budgets

9. The Mayor is currently supported by virtue of being accommodated in the Town Hall. There are historically two budget headings for the Mayor. In 2017/18 the civic ceremonies budget amounted to circa £8.5k. A second budget (hospitality) budget amounted to £22k per annum. In total, for 2017/18 the budget amounted to £30.5k. With support costs, the total amounted to circa £85k per annum.
10. The proposal that has already been the subject of consultation includes:

The relocation of the Mayor's office to the Civic office, resulting in a potential building cost savings of £24.5k per year, subject to these costs being passed on to a third party in the event of the Mayor's parlour and ancillary accommodation being declared surplus and let. This will potentially also result in additional rental income.

The reduction in staffing support costs, as a consequence of relocation, which will amount to a further saving.

The reduction in the Mayoral budget from £30.5 k per annum to £20k per annum.
11. A Mayor will still be elected each year, as will a Deputy Mayor. The Mayor will continue to chair Council meetings and represent the Council at civic and ceremonial functions. The Mayor's budget (currently 2 budget headings) will be combined and reduced to £20k per annum and thereby generating a saving of £10.5k per annum. This will be subsequently reviewed in following years to establish whether the budget is sustainable in the longer term and also whether further savings could be generated. The role of the Mayor will clearly differ from previous years as a consequence of this reduced budget.
12. In this context, discussions have commenced as to how the Mayor will continue to raise awareness of various charities, groups and organisations and how this can be

achieved in a manner that is commensurate with current public finances and the scale of budget pressures. The approach that is being developed is the establishment of a "Mayor's Fund", similar in design to the Strong Communities Grant fund, from which local groups, charities and societies can apply to receive donations throughout the year. This is something that will be in place for the Council Annual General Meeting. The fund will receive an initial contribution of £5k, from the Mayor's budget as amended. The necessary application forms and guidelines will be set in place in time for the Annual General Meeting in May 2018.

13. These changes have allowed consideration to be given to the future use of the space previously occupied by the Mayor's office. The location, at the heart of the Town Centre, in a prestigious building means that several options can be considered, although likely use is as office space. This could also allow exploration of the future use of Arts Central, subject to further analysis and consideration. This is in line with the recently approved Arts Strategy which indicated that a review of Arts Central is necessary (Minute C251 refers).
14. As a consequence it is recommended that the Mayor's accommodation in the Town Hall is declared surplus and opportunities explored to lease the premises as appropriate. For completeness and the avoidance of doubt, the Plan at Appendix A indicates the area of the Town Hall to be declared surplus.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

15. The Resource implications are as set out in paragraphs 7 - 12. In summary, relocation of the mayor's office to the Civic office will save circa £24.5 k per annum subject to these costs being passed onto another party and alongside this the rental; or leasing of the office accommodation will result in an annual income for the Council. The precise figure will only be known once a tenant is found. The revenue savings to the Council from the restructure of the Mayor's support function and budget amounts to circa £ 60k.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

16. None directly attributable to this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

17. As stated above, in paragraph 4, the Council's Constitution will not be affected by these changes. The Town Hall is in the freehold ownership of the Council. A lease of the space now occupied by the Mayor's Office will be subject to the requirements of Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 to obtain the best consideration reasonably obtainable and for the general fiduciary duty of the Council.

Crime and Disorder Implications

18. None directly attributable to this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

19. None directly attributable to this report.

Corporate/Service Objectives

20. The changes set out in this report all contribute to reducing the costs of governance and will allow the Council to continue to sustain vital, front line services.

Policy Framework and Budget

21. This is a matter for executive decision for Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

22. As this relates to a specific corporate function, ward member consultation has not been necessary.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

23. Corporate Performance and Resources

Background Papers

Council Constitution

Contact Officer

Rob Thomas, Managing Director

Officers Consulted

Corporate Management Team

Responsible Officer:

Rob Thomas (Managing Director)